

Statistics Weekly

Thursday, 22 March 1990

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Unemployment rises in February

February labour force data gave further evidence of reduced demand for labour and rising unemployment.

Total employment in February fell 7,300 to 7,855,300 persons (seasonally adjusted). This was the net result of full-time employment falling 16,000 and part-time employment rising by 8,700 (seasonally adjusted). Trend estimates of employment continue to show a slowing in the rate of growth.

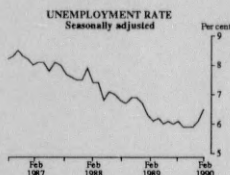
The estimated number of unemployed persons (seasonally adjusted) rose in February by 27,600 to 542,000 resulting in the unemployment rate rising 0.4 percentage points to 6.5 per cent. Trend estimates of unemployed persons have increased each month since September 1989. Since late 1989, trend estimates of the unemployment rate are also rising.

The main components of the rise in unemployment were:

- ☐ females looking for full-time work (up 12,200);
- ☐ males looking for full-time work (up 7,300); and
- ☐ females looking for part-time work (up 7,500).

The February seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for males was 5.9 per cent (up 0.2 percentage points) and for females 7.3 per cent (up 0.5 percentage points).

The female participation rate of 52.3 per cent (seasonally adjusted) was the highest recorded by the survey, and caused the overall labour force participation rate to rise to 63.7 per cent, also a record.

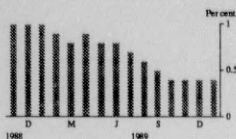


LABOUR FORCE ESTIMATES
Seasonally adjusted

	Employed			Un- employed	Unemploy- ment rate - per cent -	Particip- ation rate
	Full-time workers	Part-time workers	Total - '000 -			
1989 —						
November	6,222.9	1,626.9	7,849.8	495.5	5.9	63.6
December	6,216.2	1,634.2	7,850.4	494.5	5.9	63.5
1990 —						
January	6,214.4	1,648.2	7,862.6	514.4	6.1	63.6
February	6,196.4	1,656.9	7,853.3	542.0	6.5	63.7

For further information, order the publication *The Labour Force, Australia*, Preliminary (6202.0), or contact Don Clark (06) 252 6525.

MONTHLY CHANGE IN RETAIL TURNOVER
Trend series



Retail activity remains weak

Seasonally adjusted, Australian retail turnover grew by 0.6 per cent in January to \$6,970 million.

The trend estimates, as shown in the chart, indicate a steady slowing from the strong growth exhibited in late 1988 and early 1989 to the weak growth evident since the latter half of 1989.

Influencing this weak growth rate are the four major retail industries which, as shown in the table below, are either currently in decline or exhibiting weak to moderate growth rates.

Note that annual growth rates show considerable variability, with clothing and fabrics stores showing negative growth and hotels, etc. showing reasonably strong positive growth despite the January figure.

The annual growth rate for all retailers is a moderate 8.0 per cent. (All of these estimates are at current prices; that is, not adjusted for the effects of price movements among the goods and services retailed.)

RETAIL TURNOVER

	Original value in January 1990 \$ million	Percentage change in trend estimates	
		Average monthly increase for 3 months to January 1990	January 1990 over January 1989
Grocers, etc.	1,878	0.2	7.3
Hotels, liquor stores, licensed clubs	945	- 0.4	10.3
Department and general stores	667	- 0.2	4.8
Clothing and fabrics stores	459	0.6	- 3.6
Other retailers	2,733	— not available —	
All retailers	6,682	0.4	8.0

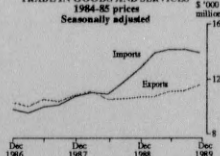
For further information, order the publication *Retail Trade, Australia (8501.0)*, or contact Maurie Low on (06) 252 7442.

Trade gap narrows in December quarter

The volume of Australia's exports of goods and services, as measured at average 1984-85 prices, rose by 6.1 per cent in the December quarter 1989, while imports fell by 2.6 per cent. After adjustment for seasonal influences, however, this improvement was rather less marked; the volume of exports rose 3.7 per cent while imports fell by 1.8 per cent.

On a seasonally adjusted basis and at average 1984-85 prices, merchandise exports increased by 5.2 per cent in volume. This was due to a rise in non-rural exports, partly offset by a fall in rural exports. Merchandise imports declined 3.3 per cent in volume following falls in imports of civil aircraft, and in both consumption and capital goods.

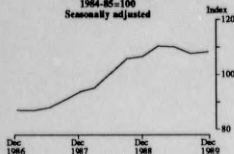
TRADE IN GOODS AND SERVICES
1984-85 prices
Seasonally adjusted



EXPORTS AND IMPORTS OF GOODS AND SERVICES

Seasonally adjusted; average 1984-85 prices
\$ million

	September qtr 1989	December qtr 1989	Percentage change
Merchandise exports	9,154	9,632	5.2
Services, credits	1,997	1,931	-3.3
Total exports of goods and services	11,151	11,563	3.7
Merchandise imports	11,178	10,811	-3.3
Services, debits	2,993	3,106	3.8
Total imports of goods and services	14,171	13,917	-1.8

TERMS OF TRADE
1964-85=100
Seasonally adjusted

Australia's terms of trade rose by 0.6 per cent during the quarter resulting in a 1.7 per cent rise since the December quarter 1988. (The *terms of trade* is a ratio of the price index of goods and services exported over the price index of goods and services imported.)

For further information, order the publication *Balance of Payments, Australia* (5302.0), or contact either Alan Puckeridge on (06) 252 6689 or Neil Batty on (06) 252 5540.

Dwelling commencements continue to decline

In seasonally adjusted terms, the number of dwellings commenced in the December quarter 1989 fell by 3,550 (10%) over the September quarter 1989, and by 11,350 (25%) when compared with the December quarter one year earlier.

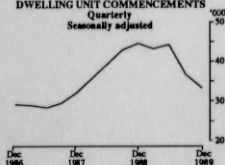
DWELLING UNIT COMMENCEMENTS
December quarter 1989

	Private sector houses		Total dwelling units	
	Number	Percentage change on previous quarter	Number	Percentage change on previous quarter
Original figures	23,150	-13	34,720	-10
Seasonally adjusted	21,880	-15	33,250	-10

Significant falls in private sector house commencements occurred in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. However, Queensland and Tasmania recorded small rises over the September quarter 1989.

Apart from houses, the term *dwelling unit* is used to cover other residential buildings such as townhouses and apartment buildings. Commencements of dwelling units in the 'other residential building' category declined by about 370 (or 3%) nationally during the December quarter 1989 compared with the September quarter 1989 and by 10 per cent when compared with December quarter 1988.

For further information, order the publication *Building Activity, Australia* (8750.0), or contact Paul Seville on (06) 252 6067.

DWELLING UNIT COMMENCEMENTS
Quarterly
Seasonally adjusted

International labour market comparisons

International comparisons of the more important series are included among a wide range of labour market information in the recently released *Labour Statistics, Australia* (6101.0).

The international data, presented in time series form, provide comparisons between Australia and major OECD countries. Aspects of the labour market covered include employment, unemployment, wages, hours of work and industrial disputes. Selected features in textual form highlight the more significant elements and trends in the statistics.

For example, the unemployment rate for Australia in 1988 was 7.2 per cent. Rates for other countries ranged from 1.6 per cent for Sweden to 10.3 per cent for France. Between 1978 and 1988 the unemployment rate increased for Australia, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and France. The rate decreased, however, in the USA, Sweden and Canada.

Unemployment rates in 1987 for persons aged under 25 years ranged from 5.2 per cent in Japan to 35.5 per cent in Italy. The rate for Australia was 14.6 per cent. Over the period 1977 to 1987, large increases were recorded for the United Kingdom (12.7 to 17.4), France (11.1 to 23.0) and Italy (23.9 to 35.5).

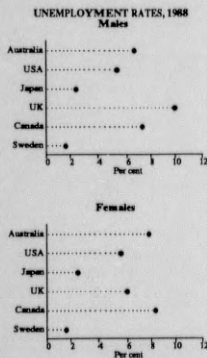
For the most part, however, the publication, which has been developed primarily as a reference resource, presents a comprehensive overview of the operations of the Australian labour market.

In addition to those aspects already mentioned, information is provided about underemployment, persons not in the labour force, award rates of pay, labour costs, trade union membership, non-wage benefits, work preferences and job satisfaction.

SELECTED LABOUR FORCE STATISTICS, 1988
(Source: OECD)

Selected countries	Labour force (million)	Unemployment rate (per cent)	Percentage of employment in		
			Agriculture	Industry	Services
Australia	8	7.2	6	26	68
USA	122	5.4	3	27	70
Japan	62	2.5	8	34	58
UK	28	8.3	2	29	69
Canada	13	7.8	5	26	70
Sweden	4	1.6	4	29	67

For further information, order the publication *Labour Statistics, Australia* (6101.0), or contact Information Services (see page 6).



Inquiries

The ABS supplies a wide range of statistical information:

- ☐ through its bookshops
- ☐ by mail order (including subscription)
- ☐ by facsimile
- ☐ electronically.

To order any of the publications that appear in *Statistics Weekly* or to inquire about the statistics and services available from the ABS, contact Information Services at any of the offices listed below. An Information Consultancy Service in each office provides assistance of a more extensive or complex nature.

ABS Central Office

- ☐ PO BOX 10
BELCONNEN ACT 2616
- ☎ (06) 252 6627
- FAX (06) 253 1404

ABS State Offices

- ☎ NSW (02) 268 4611
- Vic. (03) 615 7000
- Qld (07) 222 6351
- WA (09) 323 5140
- SA (08) 237 7100
- Tas. (002) 20 5800
- NT (089) 81 3456

Any suggestions for improvement to this publication should be addressed to:

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All the week's releases: 14 to 20 March

General

- Monthly Summary of Statistics, Aust., March 1990 (1304.0; \$17.50)
- Statistics Weekly, 15 March 1990 (1318.0; \$3.50)
- Economic Indicators, Qld, March 1990 (1307.3; \$5.00)
- Summary of Statistics, NT, December Qtr 1989 (1305.7; \$7.50)

Demography

- Australian Demographic Statistics, September Qtr 1989 (3101.0; \$10.00)

Social statistics

- Law and Order, Qld, 1988-89, Summary (4501.3; \$4.50)

National accounts, finance and foreign trade

- Balance of Payments, Aust., December Qtr 1989 (5302.0; \$16.50)
- Imports, Aust., Monthly Summary Tables, January 1990 (5433.0; \$8.00)
- Personal Finance, Aust., December 1989 (5642.0; \$5.00)

Labour statistics and prices

- The Labour Force, Aust., February 1990, Preliminary (6202.0; \$8.50)
- The Labour Force, Aust. — Preliminary Data on Floppy Disk, February 1990 (6271.0; \$60.00)
- House Price Indexes: Eight Capital Cities, December Qtr 1989 (6416.0; \$25.00)

Agriculture

- Livestock Products — Meat, Qld, January 1990 (7204.3; \$3.30)

Secondary industry and distribution

- Production of Clothing and Footwear, Aust., December 1989 (8358.0; \$8.50)
- Production of Paper, Plastics, Paints, Industrial Chemicals and Detergents, Aust., December 1989 (8362.0; \$5.50)
- Retail Trade, Aust., January 1990 (8501.0; \$8.50)
- Building Activity, Aust.: Dwelling Unit Commencements, December Qtr 1989, Preliminary (8750.0; \$5.00)
- Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, NSW, November 1989 (8741.1; \$8.10)
- Tourist Accommodation, Tas., Licensed Hotels with Facilities, February 1990 (8646.6; \$5.00)
- Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, Tas., December 1989 (8741.6; \$3.00)

Calendar of key releases

Expected releases over the fortnight to 3 April 1990

- 21** Australian National Accounts: National Income and Expenditure, December Qtr 1989 (\$206.0; \$16.50)
- 22** Export Price Index, Australia, January 1990 (6405.0; \$5.00)
- 26** Housing Finance for Owner Occupation, Australia, January 1990 (\$609.0; \$8.00)
- 27** Price Indexes of Articles Produced by Manufacturing Industry, Australia, January 1990 (6412.0; \$6.00)
- 28** Australian National Accounts: Gross Product, Employment and Hours Worked, December Qtr 1989 (\$222.0; \$8.00)
Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building, Eight Capital Cities, January 1990 (6407.0; \$9.00)
Production Statistics, Aust., February 1990, Preliminary (8301.0; \$5.00)
Registrations of New Motor Vehicles, Aust., February 1990, Preliminary (9301.0; \$4.00)
- 29** Average Weekly Earnings, States and Australia, November 1989 (6302.0; \$8.50)
Job Vacancies and Overtime, Aust., February 1990 (6354.0; \$10.00)
Price Index of Materials Used in House Building, Six State Capital Cities and Canberra, January 1990 (6408.0; \$3.75)
Building Approvals, Aust., February 1990 (8731.0; \$8.50)
- 30** Balance of Payments, Aust., February 1990 (\$301.0; \$12.00)
Price Indexes of Materials Used in Manufacturing Industries, Aust., January 1990 (6411.0; \$8.50)

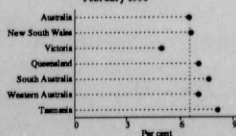
The latest ...

Changes to key State indicators — consolidated to
20 March 1990

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
— Percentage change from same period previous year —									
New capital expenditure (Sept. qtr 89)*	15.9	24.8	15.2	0.0	45.4	-26.7	n.a.	n.a.	21.1
Retail turnover (Jan. 90) (trend estimate)	8.2	7.9	10.1	4.7	8.0	6.9	n.a.	7.0	8.0
New motor vehicle registrations (Jan. 90)*	32.2	-3.3	23.3	21.8	13.9	n.a.	-5.7	3.9	18.4
Number of dwelling unit approvals (Jan. 90)	-27.9	-26.4	-26.9	-9.6	-22.8	19.72	66.7	16.2	-23.9
Value of total building work done (Sept. qtr)	20.5	25.8	28.1	30.9	36.5	18.2	1.8	6.4	24.8
Employed persons (Feb. 90)*	1.8	3.9	5.4	2.0	2.2	7.0	-2.6	6.2	3.2
Capital city consumer price index (Dec. qtr 89)	7.4	8.5	7.7	7.5	7.8	7.4	7.5	6.5	7.8
Average weekly earnings (full-time adult ordinary time) (August 89)	10.6	6.9	5.8	7.6	5.8	6.7	4.5	7.5	8.0
Population (June 89)	1.1	1.3	3.2	1.1	3.0	0.6	0.2	1.6	1.6
Guest nights in licensed hotels and motels, etc (Sept. qtr 89)	-8.5	19.0	-24.5	13.8	4.5	-6.6	2.1	-6.7	-7.9

* Seasonally adjusted for States (but not Territories)

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
Seasonally adjusted
February 1990



Key national indicators – consolidated to 20 March 1990

		Latest figure available			Percentage change (a) on		
		Period	Original	Seasonally adjusted	Previous period	Corresponding period last year	
National production							
Gross domestic product	— current prices (e)	\$m	Sept. qtr 89	89,803	89,733	1.8	13.0
	— 1984-85 prices (e)			63,334	63,732	0.7	5.4
Industrial activity							
New capital expenditure	— current prices	\$m	Dec. qtr 89	7,826	7,173	-2.3	17.2
	— 1984-85 prices			5,915	5,436	-4.1	0.2
Expected new capital expenditure		"	Six months to June 90	15,245	n.a.	n.a.	8.3
Retail turnover	— current prices	"	Jan. 90	6682	6970	0.6	6.6
	— 1984-85 prices	"	Dec. qtr 89	16,697	14,831	0.2	3.7
New motor vehicle registrations		no.	Jan. 90	44,212	53,591	8.6	18.4
Dwelling unit approvals		"	Jan. 90	9,540	11,379	3.1	-26.5
Value of all building approvals		\$m	"	2,500	2,838	56.8	5.2
Value of total building work done	— current prices	"	Sept. qtr 89	7,973	7,583	-1.8	24.7
	— 1984-85 prices	"	"	5,257	4,999	-3.9	11.2
Manufacturers' sales		"	Dec. qtr 89	37,329	35,539	3.1	9.9
Expected manufacturers' sales		"	Six months to June 90	71,716	n.a.	n.a.	9.7
Labour							
Employed persons		'000	Feb. 90	7,809.1	7,855.3	-0.1	3.2
Unemployment rate †		%	"	7.1	6.5	0.4	-0.2
Participation rate †		"	"	63.8	63.7	0.1	0.7
Job vacancies		'000	Nov. 89	62.7	66.0	-0.6	-6.0
Average weekly overtime per employee		hours	"	1.6	1.5	-3.0	7.7
Prices, profits and wages							
Consumer price index	1980-81 = 100.0	Dec. qtr 89	200.7	n.a.	1.9	7.8	
Price index of materials used in manufacturing industries	1984-85 = 100.0	Dec. 89	118.2	n.a.	0.2	9.1	
Price index of articles produced by manufacturing industry	1968-69 = 100.0	Dec. 89	557.7	n.a.	0.2	7.0	
Company profits before income tax	\$m	Dec. qtr 89	5,575	4,523	-1.0	15.0	
Average weekly earnings (Full-time adults; ordinary time)	\$	November 89	516.80	n.a.	1.7	6.6	
Interest rates (b) (monthly average)							
90-day bank bills †	% per annum	Jan. 90	16.65	n.a.	-1.2	1.1	
10-year Treasury bonds †		"	12.80	n.a.	-0.1	-0.5	
Balance of payments							
Exports of merchandise	\$m	Jan. 90	3,941	3,909	-3.2	7.7	
Imports of merchandise	"	"	4,605	4,615	-15.2	16.7	
Balance on merchandise trade (c)	"	"	-664	-706	n.a.	-116.6	
Balance of goods and services (c)	"	"	-1,003	-1,068	-152.5	-80.7	
Balance on current account (c)	"	"	-1,965	-1,953	-45.2	-36.8	
Terms of trade (d)	1984-85 = 100.0	Dec. qtr 89	n.a.	108.4	0.6	1.7	
Foreign investment							
Net foreign debt	\$m	31 Dec. 89	118,391	n.a.	6.1	19.2	
Net foreign liabilities		"	158,848	n.a.	5.0	19.5	
Exchange rates (monthly average)							
US\$	per \$A	Jan. 90	0.7822	n.a.	-0.5	-10.1	
Trade weighted index	May 1970 = 100.0	"	60.4	n.a.	-0.5	-6.6	
Other indicators							
Population (resident at end of qtr)	million	June 89	16.8	n.a.	0.4	1.6	
Overseas visitors	'000	Dec. 89	247	168	-0.1	-0.2	

(a) Based on seasonally adjusted figures where available. (b) Source: Reserve Bank of Australia. (c) For percentage changes, a minus sign indicates an increase in the deficit; no sign means a decrease in the deficit or an increase in the surplus. (d) The ratio of the price of goods and services for exports to that for imports. (e) Later figures released Wednesday, 21 March 1990.

NOTES: † = change is shown in terms of percentage points. n.a. = not available.

Figures have been taken from a variety of ABS publications. Copies may be obtained from Information Services (see page 6).

Some of the figures shown are preliminary, some final, and some are revisions of previously published figures. Users should check the latest relevant publication or with the ABS Information Services if the status of the statistic is important.

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